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355 HUNTER (Josiah) The Dreadfulness of the Plague, or a Sermon Preached in the Parish-Church of St. John the Evangelist, Dec. 6th, being a day of publick fasting. 10s. 6d. **York,** Printed by Stephen Bulkley, and are to be sold by Francis Mawbarne, 1666

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The Rev. Josiah Hunter was instituted to the rectory of St. Michael, in Spurriergate, York, in the year 1662. —

(Davies' Memoir York Press: p. 89.)

Judah's Restitution, A Sermon preached before the Rev^d Judges Sir Chr. Turner, Baron of the Exchequer, & Sir Richard Bernard, Serjeant at Law, at the Assizes begun at York, July 29. 1661, by Jos. Hunter, M.A. & Minister in York: Printed by Alice Broad, 1661. Sm-4to. (Yk. Press, p. 89)

The Dreadfulnes of the Plague: A Sermon &c, as described herein (See Yk. Press, p. 100.)

55408

THE DREADFULNESS OF THE PLAGVE. OR A SERMON

Preached in the Pariſh-Church of St. *John* the Evangeliſt, *December* 6th. being a day of publick faſting.

By *Joſ. Hunter* M. A. and Miniſter in *YORK.*

Et quamvis jam animadvertunt hominum genus in terra magis magiſque indies ad tunc modum attenuatum, abſumptumque, nullo tamen timore horreſcunt; quin neque cum illorum omnium omnino interitus creſcat & latius quotidie manet ac fundatur, ulla ex parte reformidant. Euſeb. Hiſt. Eccleſ. lib. 7. ca. 16.

YORK, Printed by *Stephen Bulkley*, and are to be ſold by *Francis Mawbarne*, 1666.

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To the Right Honourable
GEORGE MANKLIN̄S
Lord Mayor̄,
And to the Worſhipful the Aldermen,
with the Commonaltȳ of the faithful
and famous Citȳ of *York*.

I *Have been encouraged to expoſe this Sermon to publick view, by the perſwaſion of ſome, that it might at this time conduce to publick good, which if I can promote (though with the hazard of mine own credit) I regard not. The great judgment wherewith God hath ſcourged our Nation this year, and the little ſenſe which we expreſs of it, would provoke a man (other-*

wise not forward) to adventure on the censure of the world, if he had but the least hope to do any good against the sottishness and stupidity of it; which seems to exceed that of the Old World, even so much as the execution of Divine Wrath doth the meer menacing and threatning of it. We used formerly to startle at the report of the Plague, but now we are become so brutish, that we mock at fear and are not affrighted: Job. 39. 22. My desire is (whatever my hopes are) to remove some from off the Lees of this most presumptuous and ill-presaging senselessness.

Now after I was perswaded to publish this Sermon, I concluded (if it had any thing of worth in it) it was due to your Lordship and Brethren in the first place, and under you to the whole City, from and amongst whom I have a comfortable subsistence

silence with so much respect and affection, as obligeth me more than I think meet here to express. You may read here what a dreadful punishment the Plague is, and consider, if it do not concern you to use your greatest diligence and circumspection to prevent a danger and to secure your City, which the Sword hath brought to poverty, and the Plague would quickly bring to beggary. When you read what a sore judgment the Plague is, and remember how God hath visited other places with it, this will be powerful to quicken you unto a thankful acknowledgment of Gods gracious and miraculous preservation of this City, so much beyond (not only our deserts) but even our expectations. Having so frequent occasions to speak to you, I forbear to enlarge my self in an Epistle: Blessed be God, the Father of mercy's and the God of all com- 2 Cor. 1. 3.

fort

fort, who hath delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us: *so rests*

Your Lordships, *&c.*

most affectionate servant

and well-wisher

Josiah Hunter.

Numbers

Καὶ εἶπεν Ἐλισαιὲ, μὴ φοβοῦ, ὅτι πλείους
οἱ μεθ' ἡμῶν ὑπὲρ τοὺς μετ' αὐτῶν.
(II Kings VI. 16)

PErlegi Concionem hanc, nec quid in eâ uſpiam deprehendi, quod Pietati promovendæ plurimum non inſerviat; proindeque dignam cenſui, quæ Imprimatur.

Edm. Diggle S. T. P. *Reverendiſſimo in Chriſto Patri, ac Domino, Domino Richardo Archiepiſcopo Eboracenſi a ſacris domeſticis.*

Datum *Epiſcopo-Thorpæ* Jan. 22. 1665.

Numb. 16. 46.

Decemb. 6th 1665.

There is wrath gone out from the Lord, the Plague is begun.

IN these Words I have formerly observed three Parts: 1. *Ira Dei*, the wrath of God. 2. *Eruptio iræ*, the breaking forth of this wrath, *wrath is gone out*. 3. *Indicium & effectus utriusque*, the token and effect of both, *the Plague is begun*. Concerning the two first of these, *the wrath of God, and the breaking forth of that wrath*, I have already spoken upon two of these occasions. I come now to the third, The token and effect of both, *The Plague is begun*.

If you observe the Scripture, you shall finde, that *Plague* is used for any notable judgement of God; The *bloudy Issue* is called a *Plague*, *Mark* 5. 29. We reade of a *Plague of Haile*, *Rev.* 16. 21. the judgements which God sent upon *Pharaoh* for his stubbornnesse, are called *Plagues*, *Exod.* 9. 14. When God doth punish a Person, or a People, (especially if it be in a notable manner) *then is he said to plague them*, Gen. 12. 17. *The Lord plagued*

Pharaoh and his Houſe, Exod. 32. 35. *The Lord plagued the People*; and ſo in other places: but *Plague* in the Text is taken for a certain malignant and infectious diſeaſe, diſtinguiſhed by that name from other diſeaſes: every judgment is a plague, but this in the Text is *The Plague*: as all ſin may be ſaid to be (κακία) *Wickedneſs*, but malice is eſpecially in Scripture called (κακία) becauſe it is one of the *greateſt wickedneſſes*: ſo every diſeaſe, every puniſhment may be called a *Plague*, but there is a peſtilent, burning, contagious diſtemper, unto which the name of *Plague* is appropriated, becauſe it is one of the greateſt puniſhments incident unto a People: the very firſt breaking out of it is terrible, it is wont to be ſo *Peſtilent* and *Deſtructive*, for ſo *Moſes* ſpeaks as ſtartled himſelf, and to ſtir up *Aaron* to make the more haſt: *Go quickly and make an Attonement for them, for there is wrath gone out from the Lord, the Plague is begun.* The Propoſition I will give you from hence, is this;

That the Plague is a dreadful judgment, a ſign of Gods great wrath.

After I have proved this, I will anſwer three Queſtions, ſubjoine a Caution, and ſo come to Application.

That the *Plague* is a fearful judgment, and token of Gods wrath, is eaſie to demonſtrate: when things are more than ordinarily dreadful, it renders the very name dreadful too: the dreadfulneſs of Damnation makes the very ſound of the word terrible: and methinks the word *Plague* ſhould ſome-

thing

thing of horrour in it, and is apt to beget a ſtartling and ſhrinking, in ſuch eſpecially as are naturally more inclined to fear: the Scripture never ſpeaks of it, but always one Epithete or other is given to it, as the note of a dreadful judgment: when *Moſes* ſets himſelf to threaten *Iſrael* with curſes for their diſobedience, he places this in the front, *Deut.* 28. 21. *The Lord ſhall make the Peſtilence cleave unto thee, until he hath conſumed thee from off the Land*: here are two things attributed to the *Peſtilence* which render it hugely dreadful, *cleaving* and *conſuming*: in the *Pſal.* 91. 3. it is called *the noiſome Peſtilence*, it is called *one of Gods ſore Judgments*: *Ezek.* 14. 21. and ver. 19. it is made a token of *Gods bloody fury*, *if I ſend a peſtilence into the Land, and pour out my fury upon it in Bloud.* When our Saviour ſpeaks of thoſe perplexed and calamitous times, that ſhould befall the *Jews* a little before the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, and the world not long before its deſolution, he puts in this for one aggravation, *Mat.* 24. 7. *there ſhall be Famines, and Peſtilences, theſe are the beginnings of ſorrows*: the deſcription which the *Pſalmiſt* gives of the *Plague*, hath much of terrour in it, *Pſal.* 78. 49, 50. *He caſt upon them the fierceneſs of his anger, wrath, indignation and trouble, by ſending evil Angels amongſt them: he made a way to his anger, he ſpared not their Soul from death, but gave their life over to the Peſtilence.* I read even of *Hypocrates*, that he was wont to call the *Plague* (τὸ θεῖον) *a ſpecial Divine judgment, a ſtroke of Gods own bare hand*, as it were: theſe

and such like instances joyned with the experience of all Ages, are enough to prove the *Proposition*: For the farther explication of it, I will answer these three Questions,

1. *Why the Plague is so dreadful?*

2. *What is it that provokes God to inflict it upon a people?*

3. *If it be such a token of Gods wrath, whether it doth befall good men, I mean Believers, and those that are in the state of justification?*

1. *Why the Plague is so dreadful a token of Gods wrath?*

I answer, 1. Because it is so *destructive*, you shall seldome (if at all) read of the *Pestilence* in *Scripture*, but *Consume* is joyned with it: we may say of every man *infected* with it, as *David* said once to *Jonathan* concerning himself, *there is but a step between death and him*: in that *Family* or *City* where the *Plague* is *vehement* and *raging*, we may say of them, as God threatned it should be with the *Jews*, *Deut.* 28. 66, 67. *Their lives hang in doubt before them, and they fear day and night, and have no assurance of their life: in the morning they say, would to God it was Even, and at even, would God it was morning, for the fear of their hearts wherewith they fear, and for the sight of their eyes which they do see.* What havocks hath this made in the earth! we may more truly say of the *Plague*, than *Samson* of the *jaw bone* (wherewith he killed so many *Philistims*) *Heaps upon Heaps*: *Judg.* 15. 16. after *David* had slain *Goliah*, they sang in Dances; *Saul hath slain his thousands, but David his ten thousands*:

1 Sam. 20. 3.

1 Sam. 18. 8.

so

so it may be said here, other diseases have *slain their thousands*, but the *Plague* hath *slain its ten thousands*: it is so *destructive*, that it is called in the abstract, *Destruction*, *Psal.* 91. 6. *Nor for the Pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor for the Destruction that wasteth at noon day.* What the Apostle affirms of wicked men, may be likewise said of this Pestilential disease, *misery and destruction are in its way*, *Rom.* 3. 16. All Histories both Sacred, Ecclesiastical and Prophane tell of the great *Desolations* that the *Plague* hath made: we read how it swept away 14000. one time, *Numb.* 16. 49. another time 24000. *Num.* 25. 8. another time 70000. 2 *Sam.* 24. 15. and yet these summs (though questionless thought very great in those times) fall far shott of what hath been since. Those that have dyed in *London* of this present *Plague* (I fear) amount to more than the three fore-mentioned summs put together. *Eusebius* speaking of a great *plague* in *Alexandria*, hath words to this effect out of *Dionysius*; *Now all things are full of lamentation, all men mourn, sadness and complaining fils the whole City, partly for those that are dead, and partly for those that are dying dayly: for it is with us now as it was with the* Egyptians, *when God slew their first-born; there was a great cry among them, because not an house, where there was not one dead.* So *Evagrius* speaks of a *plague* that continued two and fifty years; it spread (he saith) over the whole world, nor any mortal man then that did escape the Contagion; and some Cities (he reports) it invaded so vehemently, that it left not an Inhabitant in them. The *Prophet* bemoaning the deplo-

νῦν μὲν γὰρ πάντα ἔμπλεα πενθῶν πάντες, &c. lib. 7. ca. 17.

Exod. 12. 30.

Neque quisque mortalium, qui ejus effugerit contagionem &c. lib. 3. ca. 28

deplorable estate of *Jerusalem* (amongst other) hath these words, *Lam.* 1. 4. *The wayes of Zion do mourn, because none come to the solemn Feasts, all her Gates are desolate: her Priests sigh, her Virgins are afflicted, and she is in bitterness*: and it hath been known (not only in other Countries) but also in our own Nation, when there hath been such a mortality by the *Plague*, that the Churches, the Schools, the Markets, the Streets, the High-ways have all *mourned*, and some of them laid so *desolate*, that beasts might have grazed where men were wont to trade.

2. That which renders the *Plague* yet more *dreadful*, is the suddenness of that *Destruction* which it makes; the *dispatch* of the *destruction*, as I may call it: the suddenness of an evil helps to add much to the terrour of it: this is not hard to prove from Scripture, I will give you but a touch, and then apply them, *Prov.* 6. 15. *His calamity shall come suddenly, suddenly shall he be broken without remedy*: Eccles. 9. 11. *The Sons of men are snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them*: Isa. 29. 18. *this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in an high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant.* This is that which God threatens to *Babylon*, *Isa.* 47. 11. *Evil shall come upon thee, thou shalt not know from whence it riseth; and mischief shall fall upon thee, thou shalt not be able to put it off, and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou shalt not know*: well, this is of the nature of the *plague* to slay suddenly, it surprizeth men whilst they are eating and drinking, walking

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and trafficking, and sends them speedily from a state of health and soundness, to take their portion among them who have laid long silent in the dust. If you observe the Text with what follows, you shall find how quickly the *Plague* swept away 14000. it is very likely in less than an hour; in the 2 *Sam.* 24. we read of 70000. that dyed of it in three days: where the *plague* comes it doth not only make great, but sudden breaches: how quickly it makes a sad change, not only in a Family, and lesser societies, but even in Cities and greater Corporations, insomuch that sometimes places of the greatest concourse, have had cause to bewail themselves in the language of the Prophet, *Lam.* 1. 1. *How doth the City sit solitarily that was full of people, how is she become as a widow?* to day (it may be you have children rejoycing under the wing of their Parents, taking care for nothing, but even to drive away care; and before to morrow (perhaps) you shall hear them crying out lamentably (as *Elisha* when the Prophet *Elijah* was taken from him) *My Father, my Father*: to day (perhaps) Parents are rejoycing in their Children, delighting to behold them stand like *Olive-plants round about their table*, promising unto themselves (I know not what) *felicity* in their *well-doing*; and before to morrow (it may be) you shall have them (like *Rachel*) *weeping for their children, and refusing to be comforted, because they are not.* I read of *Xerxes*, that (having gathered an *huge Army*) he went upon the top of an hill to *view them*, and while he was doing this, he fell a *weeping*, to think that within an *Age* not

2 King. 2. 12.

Psal. 128. 3.

Jer. 31. 15.

one

one of those men would be left alive: did he weep to think that an 100000. men (perhaps not so many) would be all dead in an *Age*, what cause of mourning have we then, when we consider that the *Plague*, hath even in our own *Country*, taken away so *huge a number*, in less than the *Revolution* of one year? so quick is the dispatch that it makes.

3. That which makes the *plague* yet more *dreadful*, is, because it is so *spreading*, it is called *the pestilence that walketh in darkness*, Psal. 91. 6. first, it is said to *walk*, it stands not still, but makes *progress*, *spreads it self*: And then secondly, it is said to *walk in darkness*, it *diffuseth it self invisibly*, it *spreads one knows not how*. It hath been questioned by some whether the *Plague be infectious*; yea, by some it hath been strongly denyed: The main arguments which they produce, are these three: First, that God hath appointed unto every man, *not only to dye*, but also at *what time*, and of *what kind of death*, and therefore there is no great heed to be given to the *contagiousness* of any disease. Their second argument is this, if the *Plague* be *Contagious*, how comes it that some men take infection, and others escape it, being both in the *same place*, and so to outward appearance in the *same danger*. They urge in the third place, that the *Plague* comes by the *immission of evil Angels*, and therefore how can it be *infectious*? these are the chief Arguments that ever I met with against the *Plagues infection*, and yet they are so inconsiderable, that I think it but wast time to answer them. One calls the opinion (that the *Plague* is not *infectious*) worse than

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the Plague it self: another calls it a bloudy error, and none maintain it but such as cannot abide to be Gods Prisoners; it is a death to them to be out of company, and they had rather endanger a thousand lives, than want any part of their pleasure or profit.

But experience is enough to contradict this opinion; unto which we may add that concerning the Leper, who was to be shut up and none to accompany with him, which shews that there was some *Contagion* in the *Leprosie*: and yet the *Leprosie* is nothing so deadly as the *Plague*, for some have lived having the *Leprosie* many years, but such an instance cannot be given of the *Plague*. *Evagrius* (speaking of the great *Plague* at *Antioch*, and the manner of its spreading) saith, that some got it by living and conversing together: others got it by only touching them that were *infected*, or entring into the house: some received it in the *Streets*, and many that fled out of *Cities* which were *infected* (though they remained sound themselves) yet they imparted the disease to those, that before were free & helthful. But I leave the proving of the *Plagues infection* to the *Physitian*; he will tell you that living birds laid to the feet of one infected will quickly dye; he will tell you, how it may be diffused by *Garments*, by *breathing*, and many such like: this cannot be denied, but that it is *spreading*, and so *spreading*, that where it once breaks forth, a man cannot be too careful, because he can never be too secure, if secure enough. For to say that the *Plague* befalls none but such as want faith to rely upon and trust in the Providence of God, is an error more bloudy than to say, that *it is not infectious*.

4. And lastly, that which renders the *Plague* yet

more dreadful is the uncomfortableness of it: is it not a sad thing, when a mans house becomes his prison? next to our lives we value our liberty, and yet this the *Plague* deprives a man of: I might be large here, but I will confine my self within these three heads: First, the liberty of Gods house, how precious is that! *How amiable are thy Tabernacles, O Lord* (saith David) he envied even the birds that might *sit and sing neer the Sanctuary*, when he was banished from it: and in *Psal.* 42. *As the Hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my Soul after thee, O God: my Soul thirsteth for God, for the living God, when shall I come and appear before God?* and he professeth *ver.* 4. *how he poured out his Soul in him, when he remembred, how he had gone with the multitude to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise*; but this liberty is a man debared from by the *plague*; though the doors of the Sanctuary are open, yet his own doors are shut up: he cannot be admitted to hear the *voice of those that bring glad tydings of peace*: he cannot be admitted any longer to come and participate of those comfortable representations of Christ's Body and Blood: he cannot be allowed any longer to come and joyn with the Congregation in lifting up a Prayer to Heaven. I read that the *Protestants* in *France* had a Church (though now demolished) which they called *Paradise*; it is very likely, they thought the Church the only *Paradise* on earth: in this *Paradise* I would compare the preaching of the *word*, to the *Tree of knowledge of Good and Evil*; and the *Sacrament* of the *Lords Supper* to the *Tree of Life*; but where the *Plague* is, a man is excluded from this *Paradise*, he hath not the liberty to tast of the fruit of it, this is one great *discomfort*.

Psal. 84. 1.

Sleid.

2. The liberty of Friends, that is comfortable next to communion with God, communion with friends is deemed the greatest happiness on earth. *Pythagoras* hath a dark Riddle (*cor ne edito*) *eat not thy heart*: my Lord Bacon sets this glosse upon it, he that lacks friends to converse with, and lay open his grief to must needs be a *Cannibal* and eat his own heart: well this liberty likewise doth the *Plague* deprive a man of it was *Davids* Complaint, *Psal.* 38. 11. *My Lovers and my Friends stand aloof from my sore, and my Kinsmen stand afar off:* Thus it is with a man whom God hath *visited, his Lovers and Friends stand afar of*, they dare not come neer him in point of security to themselves, they dare not in point of conscience, lest they might disperse the *Contagion* among others; those are sad expressions in *Psal.* 88. 18. *Lover and Friend hast thou put far from me:* and in *Psal.* 102. 6, 7. *I am like a Pelican in the Wilderness, I am like an Owle of the Desart, I watch and am as a Sparrow alone*: yet these are the true complaints of such as are shut up under the *Plague*.

3. The liberty of Commerce is very necessary: hereby it is that men get a subsistence and livelihood for their Families, without this they cannot provide things honest in the sight of all men: but this Liberty likewise the *Plague* debars a man from, none dare Traffick with him, and this helps to add yet more to his *discomfort*: for the Merchant will tell you, that upon the ceasing of Trade, there is not only (*lucrum cessans*) *gain ceasing*, but there is likewise (*damnum emergens*) *loss arising*, because now a man is forced to take from his stock for necessary uses, so that grant

a man do escape with his life that is visited with the *Plague*; I say, suppose he hath his life for a prey, what can he do without a livelihood? and towards the procuring of this he is much disabled by the *Plague*.

So much in answer to the first Question, *Why the Plague is so dreadful a judgment?* 1. Because *it is so destructive.* 2. Because the *destruction*, which it makes, *is so quick and sudden.* 3. Because *it is so spreading.* And lastly, because *it is so uncomfortable*, for hereby a man is deprived of the *liberty of Gods house*, the *liberty of Friends*, the *liberty of Commerce.*

The second question is, *What is it that provokes God to inflict this dreadful judgment of the Plague upon a people?*

This is somewhat harder to determine; what I purpose to say concerning it, take in these three Conclusions,

1. For certain, God hath just cause given him, before he do thus manifest his displeasure, *many of his wayes are unsearchable, but none are unrighteous*; he can as soon cease to be, as to be just: if therefore at any time we cannot discerne what should be the cause, let us charge our selves with ignorance, but take heed of charging God with injustice: after God had threatned the *Jews* with the *Sword*, *the Famine*, *the noisome beast*, and *the Pestilence* in *Ezek.* 14. he adds ver. 23. *Ye shall know, that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it, saith the Lord*: and he expresseth himself yet more offended with them for standing upon their justification, *Jer.* 2. 35. *Thou sayest, because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turne from me; behold, I will plead with thee, because thou sayest, I have not sinned.*

2. This

2. This we may likewise safely affirm in the general, that sin is the *meritorious cause* (as of all other judgments) so likewise this of the *Plague*: *The wrath of God is revealed from Heaven* (saith the Apostle) against what? *all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men*, *Rom.* 1. 18. and it is the observation of a good man, that as vapours ascend invisibly, but come down again in storms and showers, which we both see and feel; so sometimes *secret sins* are the procuring cause of *open* and *notorious punishments*: this of the *Plague* is threatned unto *Disobedience*, *Deut.* 28.

3. What sins in particular may be the provoking cause of the *Plague* now, or any other time, is not so easy to conclude. I think the safest way is one of these three,

1. Either to attribute *judgments* that are *general*, unto *sins* that are most *general*: and what *sin* hath been of late years and is still most reigning in this Nation, would require one better acquainted with the *manners* of it than I am: whether *Atheisme*, or *Dissention*, or a *mutinous inclination* against *all Authority*, or *violation of Oaths*, or what else I will not say, but whether these or others are the *National sins* at present, they are hugely *aggravated*, because God hath not honoured any *Nation* with more *mercy* and *means of Grace* than ours; and therefore we could expect no other, than that he should deal with us, as he threatned he would do with his *peculiar People*, *Amos* 3. 2. *You only have I known of all the Families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for your iniquities.* Or,

2. If we know of any *notorious National sin* (though committed several years since) not yet so uni-

universally acknowledged and *repented of*, we may think that is a great *provocation* unto *God* to scourge us with the *Plague*: for this we have that famous *instance* of *Saul's breaking Covenant* with, and *slaying the Gibeonites*, for which God punished the Land in the time of King *David*) with *three years Famine*, and would not *be appeased, till several of Saul's Sons were put to death*, 2. Sam. 23.

3. This is likewise a safe course, to observe out of the Records of *Sacred writ*, for what *sins* God hath heretofore sent the *Plague*; and look how far we are *guilty of them*, so far may we *attribute our visitation to them*: now in *searching the Scripture*, I find that for *six*, yea for *seven transgressions* God hath either *threatned* or *sent the Plague*. I will but name them, and leave them to your consideration.

1. *Despising of plenty, and immoderate lusting after dainties*, so we read how the *Israelites despised Manna* (whereof they had abundance) and called it *light bread, but they lusted exceedingly after Quails, for which God smote them with a very great Plague*, Numb. 11. 33, 34.

2. We read how they that *brought up an evil report upon the Land of promise*, to the *discouragement of the people*, and the *dishonour of God*, dyed of the *Plague*, *Numb.* 14. 37.

3. *Seditious insurrections* against *Authority*, have *drawn down the Plague*: this was the cause of that *Plague* in the *Text*.

4. *Creature-confidence*, boasting of or trusting in an *Arm of flesh*; this is generally thought to be the cause of that *Plague* in the 2 *Sam.* 24.

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5. *Idolatry*, for this God was so incensed, that he slew of the people at once 24000. with the *Plague*, *Numb*. 25.

6. *Detaining and withholding from God his due*, unto this he threatens the *Plague Exod*. 30. 12. *When thou takest the summ of the Children of Israel, they shall give every man a Ransome for his Soul unto the Lord, that there be no plague among them.*

Lastly, to all these, I may add *the contempt and abuse of the Lords Supper*: for when Saint *Paul* saith, *that many of the Corinthians were sick and weak, and many dyed*, 1 Cor. 11. 30. it is not improbable, that God sent amongst them some *pestilential* and *contagious disease*. I have done with the second question, *what it is that provokes God to inflict this dreadful punishment of the Plague upon a people?* I hasten to the third.

The plague being such a token of Gods wrath, whether doth it befall good men, believers, such as are in the state of justification? for our satisfaction in this, we may have recourse to that of *Solomon*, *Eccles*. 9. 1. 2. *No man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them, all things come alike to all, there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked, to the clean, and to the unclean, to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not, as is the good so is the sinner, and he that sweareth as he that feareth an Oath.* *Ahab* and *Josiah's* death concurred in the very circumstances: and *Saul* and *Jonathan* (though different in their deportments) yet in their deaths they were not divided. Here we shall do well to consider three things,

1. Kings. 22.
2. Chro. 35.
2. Sam. 1. 23.

1. That good men are subject to, and guilty of many *sins* and *enormities*, and their *sins* admit of those

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aggravations which the *sins* of other men do not; and therefore why should we think that they should be priviledged from those temporal punishments, which God is wont to inflict for such sins.

2. Consider, that good men, even by their sins do help to draw down a judgment and common calamity upon a *Nation*; indeed God takes most *notice* of *their sins*: concerning the common sort of *prophane persons* he saith, *These are foolish, they have not known the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God*; but when his own *People* in *Covenant* with him, when these shall break the bands, then he bursts out, *How shall I pardon thee for this?* now if *good men* by their *sins* be *instrumental* in drawing down a *Pest upon a Nation*, why should they expect any other but to be involved in it?

Jer. 5. 4.

3. Consider this, as you cannot tell me any sin (be it never so gross) into which a *Believer* may not fall, except it be the *sin against the Holy-Ghost*; so you cannot assigne any judgment (be it never so great) whereunto a *Believer* is not obnoxious, unless it be *Everlasting damnation*. There is no *condemnation* indeed to those that are in *Christ Jesus*, but for *temporal calamities* they are so incident to good men, that the *Scripture* seems to make them their *Portion*, and it may be truly said of Gods Servants (as *Augustus* said once, when he sat between *Virgil* and *Horace*, whereof the one was bleer-eyed, and the other much given to sighing) *they sit* (*inter suspiria & lachrymas*) *between sighing and weeping: I am plagued all the day long and chastened every morning*, saith *David*, Psal. 73. 14. That is a pretty saying of *Clemens Alexandrinus*

Rom. 8. 1

Math. 16. 24.

Acts 14. 22.

(i.e.

(ἐγγὺς θεῦ πᾶς μαστιγίας) *He that is neer to God is always under the lash.*

It is a *Pestilent Doctrine* therefore to affirm, that *none who believe in God, and love him sincerely, can dye of the Plague*: it is very true, the dying of the *plague* shall be no more *prejudicial* to them, in respect of their *salvation*, than the dying of any other death; *All things* (and therefore the *Plague*) *work together for good to them that love God*: but the sentence of *justification*, Gods acceptation of them into favour, gives not *Believers* an immunity from any disease, but their persons are still subject unto those *diseases* which the *nature* is: and it is very soundly observed by one Mr. *Bamford* (who writ a little Treatise the last great *Plague*, but this, at *London*) that God by suffering good men to dye of the *Plague*, glorifies both his *justice* and his *wisdome*; his *justice* among the wicked, in giving them cause to say, *If God spare not the green tree, what shall be done to the dry?* his *wisdome* among the godly, lest they should say, *for our own Righteousness we are delivered.* Thus I have answered the three Questions, *Why the Plague is so dreadful a judgment? what it is that provokes God to send it? Whether it be incident to good men?* I have now only a Caution to subjoyn, and then I shall come to Application. Rom. 8. 28. Luk. 23. 31. Dan. 9. 4.

The *Caution* is this, though the *plague* be a *dreadful judgment*, yet the *Scripture* speaks of *another plague*, which is far worse: and yet whilest we do what we can to *flie the lesser plague*, we do what we can to *pursue the greater*: but what *Plague* is that? *Solomon* will tell you, 1 *King.* 8. 38. *The plague of the heart*: sin in general is *the plague of the heart*; every mans own Psal. 18. 23.

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iniquity, his *peccatum in deliciis*, his *darling lust*, that is, the *particular plague of his own heart*: now this *plague of the heart* is worse than the other *plague* in several respects. I will name them, though I cannot insist on them.

1. As in good things the *cause* is better, so in evil things the *cause* is worse than the *effect*; but the *plague of the heart* is the *cause* of the *other plague*: *sin* brought in *misery* at first, and *misery* hath ever since pursued *sin*.

2. We are more sensible of the *plague of the body*, than that *of the heart*, and therefore the *plague of the heart* is more dangerous: the first step to health is to have a *feeling of our disease*, therefore there is less *hope of cure*, where there is less feeling of the *Distemper*.

3. Nature doth not only feel the *Plague of the body*, but it may by Gods blessing upon means, be of force to work out the *malignity of it*, that it shall not prove *mortal*; for else none that have the *plague* should escape death, but by a *miracle*: but *corrupt nature* (as it is not sensible of the *Plague of the heart*) so neither hath it power to work it out: if the great *Physitian of Souls* cure it not, it is not all the *strength of Nature*, the *art of man*, the *power of Medicines* that can avail any thing, but the soul is infected and will be destroyed.

4. Though *the plague of the body be infectious*, yet
Prov. 18. 14. *the plague of the heart* adds *venome* and *malignity* to it: *The spirit of a man will bear his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?* sin *embitters* and *poysons* any *affliction*: the sting of every *penal evil* is sin, this is

the

the plague of *the plague*: an *affliction* consists not in *the bulk* of it, but the *burthen*; what is a *Serpent* without a *sting*, or a great *bulk* if it hath no *weight*? where *the plague of the heart is cured*, the other *plague is more easily borne*: though the *cross* continue, yet the *curse* is taken away.

5. *The plague of the heart* is worse than the other *plague*, because it seizeth upon, and infects the *better part* of *man*, his *Soul*; that which is more worth than a *world*, and could be *Redeemed* by no less than the *precious blood of Christ*: look how much better the *Soul* is than the *Body*, by so much worse is the *plague of the heart*, than that of *the body*. Mat. 16. 26. 1 Pet. 1. 18.

Lastly, as *Christ* said *concerning men*, so may I say *concerning the plague*, the utmost it can do, *is but to kill the body*, and that for a time; but the *Plague of the heart* will *destroy both body and Soul everlastingly*: that *death* which consists only in a *separation* of the *Soul* from the *Body*, is nothing so terrible as that which consists in an *everlasting separation* of the *Soul* from *God*. But some men will never be convinced what a *plague* the *Plague of the heart* is, till they come to feel the *plagues of the damned*, then they shall *wish for death, but it shall flee from them*. I come now to *Application*. Luk. 12. 4. Rev. 9. 6.

1. If the *plague* be such a token of *Gods wrath*, what cause have we of this Nation to think that *God is wroth* and *displeased with us*, since he hath visited us with such a *Plague*, as cannot be parallelled since the *Sweating sickness*, and that in such a juncture of time, when it could not have been more prejudicial to the *affairs* of the *Nation*: it is hard to say, whether we

have more cause to tremble at *Gods judgment* in this *plague*, or to admire at his goodness in the *abatement of it*, when it once threatned the *whole Nation*, as though the Lord had purposed to make a full end,
Nahu. 1, 9. that *affliction* should not rise up the second time.

Now mark what the Prophet saith, *The Lion hath roared, who will not fear? Amos* 3. 8. when Gods hand
Is. 26. 9, 10, 11 is lifted up, he expects that we should see it, and express a sense of it: the People of *Nineveh* believed God, and *proclaimed a Fast, and put on sackcloath, Jon.* 3. 5. and did we verily believe, that *God is wroth* with us, we should busy and bestir our selves towards the appeasing of it: This day would be observed with more *solemnity*, our Prayers sent up to Heaven with more *devotion*, the Word listen'd unto with more *attention*, Alms given with more *freeness* and *abundance*.

All tokens and testimonies of *Humiliation* are little enough, when God shews such tokens of his *wrath* as the *Plague* is: this is not a time to addict our selves to *pride*, or *dalliance*, or *luxury*. The *Romans* punished one severely, that in a time of *common calamity* was seen looking out at a window with a Crown of Roses on his head. God delights to see a People shew themselves affected with his *displeasure*: mark what he said once to the *Israelites* after they had made the *Golden Calf*, *Exod.* 33. 5. *I will come into the midst of thee in a moment and consume thee* (it is not an absolute determination but a conditional comination) *therefore now put off thy Ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee*: that is, humble thy self, give some testimony of the awe that thou standest in of my *wrath*, of thy sorrow for the sin that hath incensed it, that

though I be *highly provoked*, yet I may be *moved* to have *pity on*, and shew some *favour to thee*.

2. If the *Plague be so dreadful a judgment*, what *cause* have we of *this City* to bless God for *our preservation from it*? especially considering *how many dangers* we have been *exposed to*, some through the *necessity of State*, others through our *own improvidence*, and some through the *corrupt* and *covert dealings* of *Passengers* and *Traders*: to be *preserved from danger* is a *mercy* at any *time*, but *especially* then, *when* we see *others overtaken*, and *our selves encompassed* with it: What may we *attribute* this our *preservation* to? shall we *impute* it to our *own diligence* and *care*? no certainly, for if *our watchfulness* had been *ten times more*, yet we read in *Psal.* 127. 1. *Except the Lord keep the City, the watchmen waketh but in vain*: shall we ascribe it to any *merit* or *desert* of *ours*? nay, that would be *far worse*, as *Job* saith, *Job* 9. 20. *Our own mouths would condemne us and prove us perverse.* I would it might not be said of us, as it was once of *Ahaz*, that *in this time of distress we have trespassed yet more and more*: 2 Chr. 28. 22.
sure it is, *vice* and *profaneness* are grown to that height of *impudence*, as hath not been known in former years: Eph. 5. 3.
those *vices*, which heretofore were scarce once *named amongst us*, are *become common*: what said God once *concerning Judah*, *Jer.* 3. 8. *When she saw that God had given back-sliding Israel a Bill of Divorce, and put her away for her adulteries, yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the Harlot also*: it is easie to *apply it* here, though we saw what God had *done to London*, yet *we have not feared*, but gone on *to corrupt our selves* and *do so wickedly*, as if we intended

to justifie them, or as if we thought, that *the sins of the Nation* could not be soon enough *filled up*, unless we added *more measure to them*. Our *preservation* therefore can be *attributed* to nothing, but the *merciful* and *gratious protection* of *Almighty God*; *And therefore let us magnify the Lord, and let us exalt his name together*: *let us bless him at all times, and let his praise be continually in our mouths*: *for he it is, that hath held our souls in life, and not suffered our feet to be moved*: *he hath hitherto delivered us from all our fears, and put a new song into our mouth, even praise unto our God. Only let us fear the Lord and serve him in truth and with all our hearts, for consider how great things he hath done for us, but if we shall still do wickedly, sin lies at the door, and judgment will find us out.*

Psal. 34. 1, 2, 3, 4.

Psal. 66. 9.

Psal. 40. 3.

1 Sam. 12. 24.

Gen. 4. 7.

Num. 32. 23.

3. And lastly, if the *Plague be so dreadful a judgment*, then it calls upon us loudly to pity those, whom God hath been pleased to *exercise with so heavy a visitation*: think that you hear the *great City of the Land* thus *bewailing her misery*, and *begging your commiseration*, as the *City Jerusalem* once; *I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath, surely against me is he turned, he turneth his hand against me all the day, he hath bent his bow and set me as a mark for the arrow*: *I envy not your immunity, only desire you to commiserate my Calamity*: *Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends, for the hand of God hath touched me*, Job 19. 21. We have no hasty and fearful fleeing out of our *City*, *whole families* made desolate, *miserere deus* upon our doors, we hear not that doleful voice, *bring out your dead*.

Lament. 3.

Eusebius saith, that in the *Plague* at *Alexandria* the

the *Christians* were as careful of one another, visited those that were infected, provided for them, conversed with them, buryed them as at other times; but the Heathen regarded not their Neighbours and friends, but fled from them, suffered them to starve, and afterwards to lye unburied. I acknowledge there is much difference between the spirits of Christians now, from what was in those Ages, for then they were willing upon all occasions to hazard, yea to lay down their lives for the Brethren. I blame not the Christians at *Alexandria* for what they did, because I know not what Heroick principle they might have to induce them to it: perhaps they did it for to set a pattern and example to the Heathen, among whom they lived; to let them see, that they were not afraid of death, and that their love to each other was so great, that nothing could separate them. But it is not safe to tempt God and run our selves upon hazards, where we have no warrant: we cannot, we may not in a time of *infection* converse so freely with, and do those offices to the *infected*, as we would at another time: yet it behoves us however to do all we can safely: there is no danger sure in pitying them, in praying for them, in contributing toward their necessities: these we may safely do, we cannot *salvâ conscientiâ* omit them.

1 Joh. 3. 16.

Mat. 4. 7.

And now that I have mentioned *Contribution*, I cannot, but I must tell you, that there is *no reality* in *our commiseration* without it. St. *James* declares against such, as say to one *that is in want*, *Be ye filled, and be ye warmed, but give them not those things that are needful for the body*, Jam. 2. 16. St. *John* is yet sharper, 1. *John* 3. 17. *whoso hath this worlds goods, and seeth his*

Brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? Giving of *Alms* is one of the main ingredients into an *acceptable Fast*. The *Fast* that God hath chosen is to deal our *bread to the hungry, cloath the naked*, and not to *hide our selves* from our own flesh, *Isa.* 58. 6, 7. we cannot tell, whether it may please God to visit us; but if he should, happy that man then who hath not been defective in his duty to the *infected*, whose *bowels* have melted and turned within him for their *Calamity*, whose *Prayers* have been dayly *poured out for their redress*, whose hands have been *stretched out wide*, and *without grudging* for their *Relief*, and lastly whose *conversation* hath been ordered aright, *that they and the whole Land might see the salvation of God.* *Amen.*

Psal. 50. 23.

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